

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Wagner School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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Dates of On Site Visit: April 29 - 30, 2002

Date of Report: July 16, 2002

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Maintenance	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Specific district policies
- ? Interagency agreements
- ? State data

Maintenance

The steering committee determined that the district has in place policies and procedures for providing training for all staff. Staff training has taken place in the areas of making modifications/accommodations and/or adaptations for all students, inclusion, diversity training, and the Boys Town model has been implemented school-wide.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee determined that the district is not providing data to the special education staff in a timely manner concerning students who are suspended. The IEP committee is convened but sometimes beyond the 10 days allowed before a change in placement.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

Students served in Wagner Community Schools benefit from the Boys Town model discipline training. The district has implemented a comprehensive, computerized, behavior/discipline tracking system for all students in the district.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas that need improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas in need of improvement for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas out of compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

24:05:22:03. Certified child.

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. This definition applies to all eligible children ages 3 to 21, inclusive, and to only those children under the age of 3 who are in need of prolonged assistance.

Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. Evaluation documentation found for two students did not support eligibility for the category mental retardation (510) and other health impaired (555). The district has been informed of the student names and is required to immediately reevaluate and determine if these children meet the South Dakota eligibility criteria based upon the suspected areas of disability. In the event the students do not meet the eligibility criteria, the district will be required to reimburse the child count funds received based upon their inclusion on the 12-01-00 child count.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Specific district policies
- ? State data

Maintenance

The steering committee determined special education services provided to all children who are determined to be eligible for special education and related services as an area of maintenance. If a child is removed to an alternative education setting, the placement committee does meet and plan a functional behavioral assessment, plan a behavioral intervention plan and modify the behavior improvement plan if necessary. The last resort is to place a student out of district.

Areas that need improvement

The steering committee indicated a need for the district to be consistent with providing students who have been suspended or expelled FAPE, especially if the parents are keeping them at home. Educational services need to be provided to those students.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas that need improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for

evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Specific district policy

Maintenance

The steering committee noted that evaluation procedures and the instruments used by the evaluators are tailored to assess the students in all areas of suspected disability.

Areas that need improvement

The steering committee noted that general education teachers need to be included in the planning and implementation of the IEPs for students in their classes. All stakeholders need to be informed of the content of an IEP.

Areas out of compliance

The steering committee noted that the three-year reevaluations have not been conducted within the time period and the 25 school day evaluation period has been exceeded. The steering committee indicated that this problem could be corrected if the teachers take the responsibility to fill out and send prior notices for the students whose IEPs they monitor.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance identified under appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee. Additional information regarding evaluating in all areas of suspected disability is provided under areas out of compliance.

Areas that need improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the areas in need of improvement as identified under appropriate evaluation. Through staff interview, it was noted that the psycho educational report is not complete by the time the meeting is held, however, the IEP indicated that the parents received a copy of the report. Refer to ARSD 24:05:25:04.02. Determination of needed evaluation data. Additional information regarding functional assessment is found in the areas of out of compliance.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures.

Evaluation procedures must ensure that a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability. In 3 student files reviewed, the students were identified as students with a developmental delay. These students are entering kindergarten and turning 6 years of age. The evaluations administered did not include a psychological, achievement or any types of functional evaluation.

24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures.

A variety of assessment tools and strategies must be used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child to determine eligibility and program placement. Through a review of 18 student records, the monitoring team found the district staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process or understand that this information was to be summarized and used for determining specific skill areas affected by the student's disability, the student's present level of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of annual goals and short term instructional objectives. Functional assessment information is available through a variety of sources in the district, however, there is not an established process across all grade levels and disciplines for collecting, analyzing, summarizing or integrating the information into the 25-day evaluation process for all eligible students.

24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures.

Evaluations must be administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer. The school psychologist is not qualified to administer the Human-Figure-Drawing test.

24:05:25:04.02. Determination of needed evaluation data

A team of individuals, including input from the student's parents, determines what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs. Through interviews with staff the monitoring team concluded that the district does not implement a consistent procedure for documenting parental input. Some staff stated they usually make a comment on the prior notice, others stated they make a "parent contact" note in the record and there also is a form that can be completed and included in the file. Evidence of parent involvement into the evaluation process was not available in a review of 12 student records.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Specific district policies

Areas that need improvement

The steering committee found through file reviews that the three-year reevaluations have not been conducted within the time allotted. The steering committee also noted that general education teachers should be included in the planning and implementation of the IEPs for students in their classes. All stakeholders need to be informed of the contents of an IEP.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:30:16.01. Transfer of parental rights.

The steering committee noted that secondary transition students and their parents need to participate in the transfer of rights at least one year prior to the students 18th birthday. This needs to be the responsibility of the whole team. Additional information may be found in areas out of compliance under Principle 3.

Validation Results

Areas of needed improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of needed improvement identified under procedural safeguards. Additional information regarding the transfer of rights at age 18 is provided under areas out of compliance.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:30:16.01. Transfer of parental rights

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

The student and their parents must be informed of the transfer of parental rights one year prior to the student turning 18. In a review of 3 student records, there was no indication the student or parents were informed of the transfer of rights one year prior to the student turning age 18.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Specific district policies
- ? Budgeted services
- ? Curriculum guides
- ? State data
- ? Other

Maintenance

The steering committee concluded that the district provides an IEP for each eligible student. The contents are intact, functional assessments have been included in the PLOP narratives, and the parents are given an in depth explanation of the content.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:27:01.01. IEP team.

24:05:27:02. IEP team meeting date.

The steering committee found through file reviews that general education teachers are not consistently a part of the IEP team. Sometimes one teacher attends the IEP meeting, sometimes they leave the meeting before it is over and the contents of it are made available later. The steering committee noted that the sometimes IEP meetings are held past the 30 calendar days allowed after the receipt of evaluation data.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance as concluded by the steering committee, with the exception of functional assessment. Additional information regarding IEP content and functional assessment is provided under areas out of compliance.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In a review of 15 student records, present levels of performance were not linked to functional evaluation. The present levels of performance did not consistently contain the student's academic strengths, needs in the skill areas affected by the student's disability or their involvement in the general curriculum.

For each student beginning at age 14, the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's course of study. For each student beginning at age sixteen a statement of the needed transition services is required including interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. Through interview and review of student records the review team found transition evaluation was not considered or administered for students approaching transition age in order to design an outcome oriented process which promotes movement from school to post-secondary school activities. Transition evaluation was not conducted in five student files reviewed. Transition activities were addressed but were not tied to current present levels of performance and evaluation. During interview, district staff stated they were unsure of the transition requirements and how to effectively determine and incorporate transition services into a student's program. The monitoring team recommends the district incorporate transition inservice activities into the improvement planning process for district staff.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions; consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Budgeted Services

Maintenance

The steering committee noted that the district follows the mandates for least restrictive environment, documentation is provided for it and the teacher justifies the continuum of least restrictive environment, and the appropriate grade level instructional materials are provided to each child based on the general education curriculum.

Validation Results

Promising practices

Wagner Community School practices inclusion for students with disabilities in an exemplary manner. The model includes team teaching practices, which are an excellent resource for students. The teachers listed benefits for staff as well.